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KAIVALYA SUDHA

ब्रह्मविदाप्नोति परम्.

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वेदान्तविज्ञानसुनिश्चितार्थाः
संन्यासयोगाद् यतयः शुद्धसत्वाः ।
ते ब्रह्मलोकेषु परान्तकाले
परामृताः परिमुच्यन्ति सर्वे ॥

All men of renunciation, who are well established in the knowledge of the Self, whose soul is purified through the practice of renunciation, who attain the supreme immortality, gain final emancipation by being merged in the Absolute after death.

Phone: 49 Wadakancheri

JNANA ASRAM,
P. O. VYASAGIRI,
Wadakancheri,
Trichur Dist., Kerala.

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KAIVALYA SUDHA

न कर्मणा न प्रजया धनेन
त्यागेनैके अमृतत्वमानशुः ।

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Food for Thought

We are, understandably enough, resting our oars after a well-merited and resounding victory won in record time in a Dharmic war that had been imposed on us by an unscrupulous enemy, to whom any means were good enough to gain their nefarious ends. Our victory has boosted our morale tremendously. It has also given us a new image in the eyes of the great world powers, though, unfortunately some of them grudge the new status and power that we have become heir to. All these are for the good, since, by and large, we have been able to get rid of the 'inferiority complex' from which we have been suffering for the last 28 years after independence. There is now a new awakening, a new sense of mission and fulfilment. Most of our complexes are gone and we are now able to face others, big and small, with our heads raised high, with a look that is brimming with self-confidence.

But a nation, however great it might be politically and from the point of view of material progress, does not live by bread and butter alone. Empires, controlled by great nations have fallen in the past. Material wealth and political power decline as inexorably as there is a phenomenal rise of these. Even recent history points to this fact unmistakably. What is it, then, that gives innate strength, courage, vitality and stature to a nation? If material wealth, military strength and political power cannot be counted upon to sustain a nation at the pinnacle of glory for all time, then what else is there to fall back upon?

In the modern world, education is intended only to equip a man to fit himself into some useful vocation, which would earn

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for him a comfortable living. It is sad to say that the other, and by far the more important, side of education is totally forgotten. Education is for knowledge and enlightenment. But, alas, how few try to regard education as the source for attaining these noble ends! In the same way, a nation is not big or small in proportion to its material wealth and military might. The strength of a nation, its potential, its greatness depends on the moral and ethical calibre and spiritual attainments of its people. Just as education's more important role is to elevate man through knowledge and enlightenment, the role of any system of Government that has the true interest of the people at heart should be to give a high place for morality and ethics and true spiritual elevation of the citizens. Where there is spiritual depravity, there is selfishness, immorality and corruption. And all these three are rampant in India today, our victory and new status notwithstanding. If we do not look back to those good old days when Bharat was a by-word for spiritual glory and inner enlightenment, and learn to relive those wonderful old days, side by side with the modern trends ushered in by the twentieth century advancements in science and technology, we shall find ourselves placed in the same sad plight in which we find the people in most of the 'advanced' nations find themselves placed in now. The ICBM's and 'moon missions' notwithstanding, frustration is writ large on the younger generation in the advanced countries. They have enough employment opportunities; they have all the good things in life, their countries are materially rich. Still, we find a number–a larger number than we imagine–of young men and women revolting against the present established order there and wandering, defying all laws and codes of behaviour, not only in their own countries but everywhere in the world. They go by the name of Hippies, mistaken by some to be spiritualists, almost all of them addicted to LSD, Marijuana or some such dopes. Do we too want such a sorry spectacle to be enacted here by our own yonng men and women? Do we want to set so much store on our material advancement that we are prepared to forget the spiritual side altogether? Do we want to commit the same mistakes that the advanced nations of the West have committed? Let us ponder over these questions; let us think seriously with clear minds. And let us come to right conclusions: –that the greatest wealth of India is its spiritual heritage, that the pulse of the nation will remain strong as long as the spiritual fire in it is rekindled and kept going strong. Let us not deprive ourselves by becoming crazy after material advancement, to the exclusion of spiritual elevation.

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Religion—Its Necessity & Practice

—SWAMI PRAGNANANDA, RISHIKESH.

Before India became independent of her foreign yoke and during the days of the freedom movement it was generally believed, that the root cause of all our miseries—poverty, ill-health and illiteracy—was the hegemony of the British over the then 350 millions of Bharatavarshas' population and this has proved true to a very large extent from the progress we have now achieved in respect of (1) Modernisation of Transport and Communication (2) Expansion of Industries and Commerce opening new fields for strengthening the nation's economy (3) Promoting better opportunities for dissemination of knowledge to the deserving and needy by establishing a net-work of educational institutions both in the State and National levels throughout the country which cater for Primary and Secondary education free of tuition fees.

The important noteworthy feature in the set up of post-independent India is the development of mechanical transport linking villages, towns and cities through the use of steam, diesel and electric trains, motor cars, buses, steam-ships and aeroplanes. Next comes the phenomenal raising of the economic standard of the working classes which has enhanced their standard of living and an awareness of equality in social life which they lacked when they were tied to the bonds of an inherited serfdom. Thirdly free and compulsory education has ushered in marvellous changes with the result the masses are more sophisticated to-day than they once were.

In spite of all these progressive symptoms we have to be very cautious in assessing the values of such material changes because knowledge gained through literary education is of two kinds: that which merely diffuses facts and helps men to memorise them and that which depends on the faculty of reason. Most of the so called educated people fall under the first category only and a very small minority only comes under the second. Because

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of this difference in education, there is a big gap between theoretical knowledge and applied knowledge which we now see reflected amply in the political leadership and the leaders both in the state and National levels of the country. The remedy for filling up this gap lies not in constantly agitating for changes but in a continuous expedition of the process of turning man from the primitive to the scientific age.

It has been an accepted formula in human history that all things and events are born of ideas in the mental horizon. Good thoughts will give birth to good things and bad thoughts to bad things and as such we have to generate only such thoughts in our minds which alone can promise blooming ideas leading to great achievements in individual as well as national life. These illumined thought-waves can be generated only through established codes of ethics and morality and religion alone is capable of furnishing an inexhaustible fountain of such moral and ethical codes. Mahatma Gandhi had made it very clear that in the whole gamut of human life whether in the field of politics, religion, social activity, or any other national organisation, the main quality required to achieve success and solidarity in our efforts is human character based on ethics and morality and man can get it nowhere else than in religion. Religion is therefore an absolute necessity, a *Must*, for everyone.

Having established the necessity of religion we have to define what is meant by religion. Generally religion is understood to be a feeling of dependence upon the unseen powers which control human destiny accompanied by a fond hope to get into friendly terms with those powers. It is a belief in a 'Power' beyond ourselves which makes for righteousness and a desire to come tnto harmonious relations with that power. It is rather the Consciousness of our practical relations to an invisible spiritual order. It is the disposition of the heart and will which gives him an inner vision of the higher things and a bent of mind to live in gentleness and inward calm above the turbulent surface aspects and accidents of life. Religion in its real meaning is the emotional expression of the collective spirit of a group of persons

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and has its objective in cementing the group into a closer and more effective union thus leading to unification of the self through allegiance to ideal ends.

The foregoing definition and interpretation of religion are applicable, in a broad sense, to all the different religions of the world. The offering of prayers and worships in Hindu Temples, Sunday Services in Christian Churches, Friday prayers in Muslim mosques, meditation in a Buddhist monastery etc., are but different approaches to reap the same ends. Our ancients were really wise in establishing temples as holy places where a devout Hindu can offer his prayers to satisfy his inner urge to appease the oft-repeated hidden power believed to exist.

Many men, in the modern world, who are intelligent and of good faith imagine that they cannot believe such a hidden power or God existing because they are unable to conceive Him. An honest man with scientific curiosity does not need to visualise God, any more than a physicist needs to visualise the electrons. Any attempt at representation is necessarily crude and false in both cases. The electron is materially inconceivable and yet it is more perfectly known through its effects, than a small piece of wood. If we could really conceive God, we could no longer believe in Him because our representation, being human, would only inspire us with doubts. It is not the image we create of God that matters but it is the effort we make to create the image that counts. These efforts of man in the practice of religion are perfectly right in terms of the electronic theory in physics. We believe in the existence of electrons only through their effects. Similarly we have to believe in the existence of God by the effect i. e. the orderly functioning of this vast Universe—sun-rise and sun-set, the white and black halves of the month, the seasonal changes, flora and fauna of the earthly planet etc.

These explanations in respect of the existence of God, though acceptable to the intellectual few, will not find a ready response from the common folk because it could not calm down their emotions. This could be easily achieved through an effective control of the human mind and this needs a visible objective

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symbol of God to arrest the wandering senses and straying mind to be focussed upon. The scriptures say that God is infinite, all-pervasive, invisible and beyond the reach of the finite human faculties.

"यतो वाचो निवर्तन्ते अप्राप्य मनसा सह"

Whence the faculty of speech returns with the mind without attaining (It). Moreover it is more difficult for embodied man to conceive the infinite being with his finite mind. The Bhagavat Gita also supports this fact.

"क्लेशोऽधिकतरस्तेषामव्यक्तासक्त चेतसां ।
अव्यक्ता हि गतिर्दुःखं देहवद्भिरवाप्यते ॥

For embodied beings it is all the more difficult to tread the unchartered path because of the mind's struggle to focus itself on the unmanifest aspect of God during prayers and worship (Gita 12-5).

This is why idol and image worship is encouraged in the practice of religion in general and Hindu faith in particular.

It will not be out of place to mention an incident which happened during Swami Vivekananda's life time later in the 19th century. During those days there were a number of independent Native States in India and the respective States—rulers had to delegate administrative powers to their Devans who were appointed by the then British Government. In one of the States—Khetri if my recollection is correct—the ruler was very pious and had run a number of temples where daily worship was financed from the State exchequer. These worships followed by grand annual festivals in these temples drained away a good chunk of the State's resources. At the time of our story a new European Dewan took over charge of the state and to his surprise he found that the state, though liberal in religious practices was very backward in eradicating illiteracy and ill-health amongst the people. The new Dewan was keen to improve upon these two fundamental necessities of human progress but he could not raise the necessary finance to implement his plan.

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After days and nights of ceaseless thinking and reasoning he came to the conclusion that the only means of finding the requisite revenue was to do away with temple worship at the expense of tha state's monetary funds and leave it to be looked after by the pious people themselves.

The Dewan mooted the idea before the Maharaj and a frank and fearless discussion with the latter. The suggestion being very intelligent and statesman-like was readily approved and accepted by the Maharajah.

Accordingly a royal proclamation was issued which stated that with immediate effect the then existing system of temple management and worship financed by the state would cease and that the people themselves would have to look after these affairs from funds collected from amongst them. The result was stoppage of services in the temple resulting in mental uneasiness, despondency and fear amongst the people who now found no solace in life as the temples were deserted and devoid of the usual splendour, charm and piety. In an urgent meeting of the people it was unanimously agreed that a deputation should wait on the Maharajah to ventilate their grievances.

A group of chosen persons accordingly approached the Maharajah, explained their plight and requested him for the immediate restoration of temple worship as before. The ruling prince promised to look into the matter and in due course ordered his Private Secretary to take necessary steps in the matter. The secretary could not go ahead unless the Dewan also agreed to the annulment of the Royal Proclamation. But the Dewan was not convinced about the wisdom of such a step. During this time Swami Vivekananda, after his return from the Parliament of Religions in America, was having his perigninations in the State of Khetri and the Private Secretary of the Maharajah suggested that the Swami was the only person who could convert the Dewan to revoke the Royal decree and restore the age old tradition of temple worship in the state.

Accordingly Swami Vivekananda was invited to visit the state when a meeting was arranged in the palace for discussing

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the matter between the Swami, the Maharajah and Dewan. After the preliminary talks on the general affairs of the state the topic skipped over to religion which veered round idol and image worship in temples. Taking advantage of the opportunity the Dewan sounded Swamiji's views on the matter, thinking that such an enlightened person like him, with his western experience would certainly endorse his (Dewan) views regarding temple worship as ordered since his assumption of office. Contrary to his expectations Swami Vivekenanda strongly criticised the action of the Dewan who was very intransigent in his stand. The Swami, then, took out a photograph of the Maharajah from the reception hall and asked the Dewan to spit on it. At first the Dewan thought that the Swami was joking but when he found that the latter was very serious, he humbly observed, "Sir, how do you feel so bold in asking me to spit on His Highness the Maharajah's photo which amounts to dishonouring the Maharajah himself by me, a humble servant of His Highness?" Immediately Swami Vivekananda replied "Mr. Dewan, I am asking you only to spit on the photograph, a mere framed card-board, but not on the person of the Maharajah who is sitting here in flesh and bone." The Dewan said "Yes, Swamiji, you ask me to spit on the photograph of His Highness. Nevertheless in the photograph I see not the inert cardboard but the living Maharajah himself. At least that is my feeling." Then the Swami said "Now do you realise, Mr. Dewan, that the pious people who go to the temples daily for worship, see not the stone image or idol in the sanctum sanctorum but their chosen deity and as such you have committed great blunder in ordering the stoppage of the age-old customary worship in the temples of the state thereby making His Highness as well as yourself most unpopular in the eyes of the public."

After the illuminating discussion as narrated above, the Dewan came to his own senses and restored the old system of temple worship in the state to the entire satisfaction of the Maharajah and his loyal subjects.

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A Leaf Torn from the Book of Memory – (Contd.)

—SWAMI PURUSHOTTAM TIRTHA

Man is a very strange animal. We can predict how the other animals created by God will behave, under given circumstances. But man has ever remained unpredictable. His thinking, his logic, his impulses, his likes and dislikes, the cupidity of his heart, the unfathomable depths of his mind; these are things which no one can comprehend. If he is capable of love, he is equally guilty of hatred. If he is kind sometimes, he is also seen to be equally cruel at other times. If man is noble, he is also mean. Though we see a few who we consider are unselfish, we see many, many more who are absolutely selfish. In spite of all the wonderful social and economic reforms that man's fertile brain has formulated and the civilization that he has been able to evolve, it is a sad fact that he has not been able to break down the narrow fences of selfish materialism that he has built around himself, within which he is imprisoned.

Our Adhyatmic texts speak of three Taapas, (afflictions) that man is heir to: Adhidaivika, Adhibhautika and Adhi-atmika: afflictions inflicted by God, other created beings and man to fellow-man. Of these, those for which God is responsible cannot actually be because of any whimsical nature of God. He is never partial to His creation. He is equally kind and just to everyone. So, then, any affliction that may come to man through the supposed agency of God is nothing but man reaping the harvest of what he has sown! This argument applies to all calamities visited upon man by higher forces operating—such as floods, fires, draughts, the thunder bolt, land-slides, earth-quakes volcanoes, etc. As to the miseries coming to man from beasts, reptiles and the like, we can say that it is, in part at least, due to man's own folly of behaving in a manner which is not conducive to their safe existence. They have, perforce, to regard man as their born enemy and try to protect themselves by all the means that God has provided them with!

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But what about the third category of affliction—that inflicted upon man by fellow-man? It has been universally proclaimed and accepted that of the three categories of afflictions, the most devastating and dangerous one is that 'caused by man to man'! It is also the biggest category! How are we to explain this? In the ultimate analysis, the Indian mind, attuned as it is, can explain away everything as God's *leela* or play. Everything is ordained. Nothing happens without His will. Each one gets nothing but his own desserts. Well, put that way, it is some consolation to us. But does that explain away all the cruel, unabashed, wanton killing and maiming of man by fellow-man, not to speak of a host of other evils perpetrated by him on his own kind such as repression, economic domination, military suppression, political vendettas, etc.?

We talk glibly of man's unlimited potential to invent and improvise to advance perpetually in his quest for a better and easier life—a life which would, in the long run, hold out the prospect of very little work and a lot of liesure to enjoy and be happy. But, is it not a sad fact that at least a major portion of the efforts of man in the field of science and technology have been directed towards perfecting newer and crazier weapons of mass extermination of entire communities of his fellow-beings? A fertile brain can justify anything in the world: the top men governing a powerful country can advance any number of arguments which made it inevitable for them to pounce on a smaller nation and bring it under their heels! But does all that justify man exterminating man, subjugating his brother?

On one hand all this: on the other, we find many dedicating themselves and their money for the service of stricken and suffering humanity. There are those devotees of God who feel compelled to serve the pilgrims who trek to the different shrines where the Lord is enshrined by establishing rest centres (Dharmasalas) and free-feeding kitchens (Anna-Kshetras). There are others who devote part of their income for establishing hospitals, educational institutions, public parks, public wells and such other public utilities. How can one reconcile these two diametrically opposite forces in man? Above all, being the only species created

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with the ability to discriminate good and bad, how can we explain man's beastliness and cruelty towards fellow-man?

These were some of the thoughts that were occupying my mind that day-the day we were returning from Kedarnath. That morning of our return journey from Kedar, I have already said in the beginning of this series, has been looming up in my mind often.

There were many little incidents at different places during our *pada-yatra* which were responsible for such thoughts as described above welling up in my mind. Those who have visited the various Himalayan shrines and centres of pilgrimage must be familiar with the "Kali-kamliwala", Punjab-Sind" and Nepal Kshetras (Kali-kamliwala also maintains quite a number of Dharmasalas at the important Chattis on the Himalayan pilgrim routes), where 'rotti and dal' are served to the Sadhus, Sannyasins and Mahatmas every day. Apart from the income from the properties that these Trusts get, innumerable charitably-disposed people make contributions to these institutions for the purpose of running the Anna-Kshetras and other facilities that they offer. I know personally that the resources of Kali-Kamliwala, especially, are so large that they cannot perhaps spend on the work they are supposed to do all the money that comes to them for such work. But corruption, dishonesty and graft, so rampant everywhere today, have taken roots in these Trusts also, with the result that there is a scandalous disregard of the very purposes for which the Trusts are existing. The Sadhu/Mahatmas, who are to benefit by the facilities provided by these institutions, are mostly denied what services they could legitimately expect. We were ourselves the victims of such denial at Gangotri, where we stayed for a couple of days in 1962. We (Dayanandaji and myself) went for Bhiksha (free rotti-dal distributed by the Anna-Kshetra of Kali-Kamliwala) one day and stood in the queue. The Sadhus in our front were collecting their share, one by one, and leaving. Our chance to collect our share was coming nearer and nearer. Suddenly, there was a furore in our front in the line. One Punjabi Sadhu, we found was shouting at the server in the Kitchen; "What is it that you say? You will

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give me only two rotties. This is not your grand-father's property. Kali-Kamli Baba has provided these facilities for Sadhus like me to be served sumptuously. You thieves steal everything that the devoted people contribute for maintaining these charities. If you don't give me six rotties and dal, I shall not move away." The man in the kitchen got wild and used language much more abusive than the Sadhu. And it all ended up in the Sadhu and the kitchen-staff member coming to a free exchange of blows. We were disgusted. We moved away from the line, deciding not to wait for our turn to collect those two rotties and dal; perhaps if we had moved up in the queue, when our turns came, the quota might have been reduced to one each!

Our 1962 trek on the Himalayas was in true-mendicant fashion. We did not carry any money and were depending on what chance brought by way of food. When we were moving up to Kedarnath, our physical condition had already become alarmingly bad due to insufficient food. This affected Venu much more than the rest of us, and he was, in spite of his keeping ahead of us, to avoid talk, often telling me that we should try to borrow some money from someone. Being the member of the party who knew Hindi most, it was my duty always to be the Public Relations Officer of the group. But how could I borrow money at places where we knew no one? Moreover, was it not our intention when we started that we should trust God to sustain us in our wanderings? When the urge came to try to borrow some money and see that we had atleast one meal a day, were we not admitting that our resolve to leave everything to God had evaporated into thin air? On the way up to Kedarnath from Gourikund, there is a vaccination centre, where pilgrims who do not carry vaccination certificates have to get vaccinated against cholera. When we were showing our vaccination certificates to the Health Officer in charge at this Centre, Venu again suggested that we should ask that genteman for a loan, of course to be returned as soon as we returned to Rishikesh. I excused myself by saying that since we did not at all know that gentleman, asking for a loan from him was not to be thought of. I felt that Venu became a little more morose after this and reticent too.

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At Kedarnath too the rotties and dal that Dayananda and myself (Venu not being a Sadhu or Sannyasin, could not get Biksha from the Anna-Kshetras) could collect from the Kali-Kamli Kshetra was hardly sufficient to allay even half of our hunger, especially as the meagre Bhiksha of two had to be shared by three. Of course, it never occurred to us to quarrel with the kitchen staff then, though I was forced to do it on a subsequent occasion (1966), at the same place.

It was like this. We reached Kedarnath at about 9-30A.M. that morning in 1966 May from Gourikund, in a party of eight. Nitya Devi was practically sick and had to be supported most of the way. All were dead tired after the climb of over 4000 feet in about seven miles. We refreshed ourselves with a wash of the hands, feet and face with the icy-cold waters of the Alaknanda and went to the temple. As true Sannyasins with the mendicant-spirit, we had decided that we would take Bhiksha from the Anna-Kshetra and carry on for the day. Lest it should be too late, Swami Ananda Tirtha and myself went to the Kshetra to enquire about the time for Bhiksha. We were told that we could go for Bhiksha at 10-45 A. M. It was only 10-00 then. So we returned to the temple, and went round to see the adjoining areas. Punctually at 10-45, we reached to Anna-Kshetra to collect Bhiksha. But, to our surprise, we were told: "Aap lok deri se kyo aaya? Lunger bund hogaya." (Why have you come late? The kitchen is closed.) I tried to explain to him that we were not at fault, even if it were late, according to him, since we had been asked to go at 10-45. But that wonderful kitchen-assistant assumed a pose of wounded superiority and replied: "We are not supposed to wait here expecting late-comers like you. You go your way. There is nothing for you from this kitchen today". His words had such an air of finality about it that we knew that there was no use pleading with him. So, we made use of the only other weapon that was available to us, demanding our just rights as Sannyasins. In Hindi, I told him, in the loudest voice that I was capable of, that we were not going to leave the place till we got our Bhiksha. Kali-kamli was rich enough to feed the Sannyasins, for whose sake they were

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fed and paid. We would see that we collected our Bhiksha that day or that the Anna-Kshetra closed down for good. We were not prepared to be bullied by a mere nobody like him. We were asked to call again at 10-45, when we were there at 10 O'clock. We had been in time. And we would see whether we could get our legitimate rights. My not-too-perfect Hindi must have been more effective in spite of its imperfections. The Manager of the Kshetra, who had apparently been overhearing our argument, came out immediately, applogised profusely and requested us to wait till some Rotties could be baked and served to us. We cooled down, but insisted that since we had been made to go through such a harrowing experience, we would expect him to give Bhiksha to the Sannyasinis in our party, too. Usually, in Kali-Kamliwala, they serve Bhiksha only to Sannyasins! We got enough Rotties and Dal, finally, to feed the whole party for the whole day! Which proves, even as Sannyasins we have sometimes to quarrel for getting what is due to us by rights.

With Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer as Chairman, a Hindu Religious Endowments Enquiry Commission was appointed quite a number of years ago, to enquire into the functioning of Trusts like the Kali-Kamliwala. Quite rightly, the Commission, after elaborate enquiry and collection of evidence, recommended that the vast resources of these trusts should be, by a special enactment if necessary, diverted and utilised for better purposes. But, as we all know, there are vested interests in every sphere, and finally nothing came out of that enquiry and report!

To go back, again. Coming down from Kedernath that morning, with even the Sun feeling too cold to come out and spread His rays all around, we kept walking down to Gourikund. I was often looking back, attracted by Mount Kedar, wearing its glittering white shirt of snow. Even such a rare vista, however, could not remove the gloom and low spirits in which the mind was steeped that morning. Venu was, as usual, far in front of us. The extreme cold and chill at Kedarnath, which did not agree with Venu, had made him more uncommunicative and reserved than usual.

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While I was ruminating over the train of thoughts mentioned above, Dayanandaji, who was a little behind me, quickened his pace and caught up with me. For what reasons I do not know; even Dayanandaji felt that I was responsible for the utter gloom in which Venu seemed to be immersed. He started blaming me for my 'unhelpful' attitude and lack of 'tact' in handling that young man, who was new to such adventures. For some time, I battled with my own mind, to keep it calm. As I have said, due to insufficient diet and other adverse circumstances, the mind was turbulent even otherwise. When Dayanandaji's reproaches came, I found it hard, inspite of my best efforts, to keep my mind calm. Still I tried to carry on, without offering any reply to what all he was saying. But a point was reached, when the turbulent waters of the thoughts could not be checked and contained by the dam of the mind. It burst. Tears started flowing from my eyes. I found I was crying! Crying like a child. And crying loud and unashamedly. Not that there was anyone to hear it, in the vicinity, except Dayanandaji. But who cared, anyway? I, who boasted that I was not sentimental; I who had claimed that I had cried for the last time when my younger brother died at Calcutta, that wonderful Sannyasin in the form of myself who had started on the journey to test his high Titiksha, crying and crying. For what? God alone knew.

Dayanandaji, who was honestly not prepared for such an unusual show of such unexpected behaviour on my part, at once started pacifying me saying that he never intended to wound my feelings. After all, was it not a fact that our minds were on tender-hooks, due to various causes? Should I not make some allowance for him, even if he had said something inadvertently, without ever meaning to be critical or wanting to find fault? It was doubtful whether my mind grasped what he was saying, though it recorded the words that were heard. I simply kept on crying, without uttering a single word. Perhaps, I cried like that for half an hour, walking down all the time. I had fallen back, allowing Dayanandaji also to get on to the front by about a hundred yards, perhaps because I did not feel myself equal to the task of tolerating even his efforts at consoling me.

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Sometimes, crying is good. Positively good. When the waters of emotion, sorrow of sentiments such as these well up in the dam of the mind and threaten to burst the dam at any moment, it is better to open the flood-gates and allow the water-tears-to empty out till it goes down to the safety-level. How wonderful God is that he has provided us with all the safety-valves that we need! How thoughtful he is that he has equipped man with all the automatic mechanisms that would keep him cushioned against all sorts of shocks and jerks! The pity is that man is so ungrateful, that he does not care to remember—not to speak of offering prayers to that Progenitor who has been so kind and considerate to him!!

Perhaps, I cried like that for half an hour. Then, I felt as if all the pressure that had been building up within me had been let off. I became light-hearted and free. It was a wonderful experience. I still felt a little sad, though it was a sadness which really had no roots, no apparent reason. I walked on. But my mind was near-black. I forgot the strains and weakness of the body. Was I in a sort of Samadhi? May be. Anyway, it is so peaceful and satisfying that I would have liked that charming state to continue for ever—and ever.

This incident, this experience, was forgotten almost during the remaining part of our Yatra. Also for a long time after that morning. But recently, for the last one year or so, it has been coming up in my mind off and on. The memory of it, the details, always make me mentally go back to that Kedar environs and live up the experience, as it were, again. And even today, that experience, relieved in the mind, makes me so calm and tranquil that I cannot explain it.

Concluded)

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Koupeena Panchaka

—ADI SANKARA

The blessed state of a true renunciate, who is truly detached from the world and its attractions.

1 *Vedaantavaakyeshu sadaa ramanto*
Bhikshaannamaatrena cha tushtimantah
Asokamantahkarane ramantah
Koupeenavantah khalu bhaagyavantah.

That one who revels always in the meaning of the Vedantic texts, who is fully satisfied with what little food he collects by begging for it, who carries on without any sort of misery in the mind—such a one who possesses only a long strip of cloth to cover up his private part is alone the sole possessor of all the wealth in the universe!

2 *Moolam taroh kevalam-aasrayantah*
Paanidvaye bhoktum-amantravantah
Kandhaamiva shtreemapi kutsayantah
Koupeenavantah khalu bhaagyavantah.

That one who takes refuge only under a tree for shade, who takes food without any chanting of Mantras, with the two palms acting as the receptacles, who disregards the fair sex as if a female were nothing better than the patched-up garment made out of torn pieces of cloth (which the mendicant wears)—such a renunciate who claims only a Koupeena as his sole possession is alone the master of all the wealth in the world!

3 *Dehaabhimaanam parihritya dooraa-*
daatmaanam-aatmanyavalokayantah
Aharnisam Brahmani samramantah
Koupeenavantah khalu bhaagyavantah.

That one who has forever discarded identification of the Self with the body, who sees always the lower self as identical with the Atman; he who sports in the all-pervasive Self (Brahman) day in and day out—such a one who does not need anything other than a Koupeena as his own property is alone a lucky one!

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Naishkarmya Siddhi

(continued)

83. Moreover penances are prescribed for the removal of sin but nowhere are obligatory duties prescribed as a means of counteraction in respect of actions that have been performed for a desired end.

84. Such actions cannot be counteracted by actions of the same kind as a sin cannot be counteracted by another sin.

Thus we find that the position that freedom is attainable by means of action cannot properly be maintained.

85. It has been asserted that we get no evidence for the knowledge of the Self in scripture which in many places speaks of actions as of very great efficacy. But when an action is spo-

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4 *Swaanandabhaave paritushtimantah*
Samsaantasarvendriyavrittimantah
Naantam na madhyam na bahih smarantah
Koupeenavantah khalu bhaagyavantah.

That one who is fully satisfied in one's own blissful nature, who is fully freed from the outgoing propensities of the sense-organs, one who does not care to remember differences such as inside or outside or present-past-future—he alone is a Bhaagyavan, laying claim to nothing but the Koupeena that he wears!

5 *Panchaakshram paavanam-uchcharantah*
Patim pasoonaam hridi bhaavayantah
Bhikshaasino dikshu paribramantah
Koupeenavantah khalu bhaagyavantah.

He who constantly chants the sacred Panchaakshara—Aham Brahmaasmi—(I am Brahman)—one who cogitates Sarveswara as seated in one's own heart, that one who wanders the wide earth, living only on begged food—such a one surely is the most blessed, as he lays claim only to the rag of a Koupeena that he uses to cover his private part.

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ken of as of great efficacy, it only means that an action is effective in bringing forth results which are desired. It does not mean that action is the means, and knowledge is not the means of freedom.

86. Because action is spoken of in many places, it does not follow that the knowledge of the Self, which is spoken of in fewer places, is not valid or that it should be taken as subsidiary to action. For the validity of a piece of knowledge is not dependent upon the plurality of its sources. The evidential character of a valid source of knowledge is absolute with regard to its object. So even if there is one scriptural passage, which speaks of the knowledge of the Self its evidential character must be taken as absolute.

87. If you do not find any such passage, it is your own fault, because in fact there are a number of them which clearly speak of the knowledge of the Self.

88. It has been said that we have injunctions for the perception of the Self in such passages as "The Self should be seen" etc.

But as a matter of fact we find that an injunction is possible only with regard to an action which can be done or left undone and which is thus dependent on our will. But the knowledge of the Self is based on the nature of Reality and is not dependent on the will of any person. So it cannot be an object of injunction.

Even if we assume that there is an injuction it cannot be an injunction for something which is not otherwise obtained, seeing that the perception of the Self is always with us.

89. It has been suggested that as there is no evidence of the knowledge of the Self in the Vedas, we should have no faith in it. But this is a mere blunder. If the being of a thing is asserted on the basis of some evidence, then the absence of that evidence can be a ground for our lack of faith in it. But if a thing is self-established and is not the object of any proof, then there can be no doubt about it. The Self is not asserted on the basis of any proof. It is of the nature of consciousness itself which can never be denied and which is the basis of all proofs.

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We learn about the religious merit and demerit of our actions only from scripture and so from nothing else can we have any assurence about them. But when the Self is always self-manifest, how can there be any doubt about it?

90. As far the alleged rule that there should be an injunction in order that anything may conduce to a beneficial result, we have to say that it may very well apply to actions which bear their fruit after a long interval of time (e.g. after death). Because in their case, as the result does not immediately follow, we do not know, without the help of an injuction, whether there will be any result at all. But the rule is utterly inapplicable in the case of knowledge, because knowledge brings forth its results immediately and so its beneficial effect is not a matter of doubt that requires to be settled by a scriptural injunction.

91. The words of Jaimini have been quoted to show that the Vedas stand for action alone. But this can scarcely be the meaning of Jaimini. If this were his real meaning, there would have been no SARIRAKA SUTRAS (following the SUTRAS OF JAIMINI), which bring out the real nature of the Absolute Reality. So JAIMINI must be of opinion that as the injunctive passages are the valid source of our knowledge with regard to the objects meant by them, the passages which speak of the identity of the Self and the Absolute, are also the valid source of our knowledge with regard to the said identity, because both these kinds of passages speak of things which cannot otherwise be known (a valid source of knowledge must give us knowledge which is not otherwise obtainable). So those portions of the Vedas, which deal with injunctions can be said to have reference only to actions. Such passages as "Thou art That" which express an accomplished fact can have no reference to action.

92-3. The vedas are supposed to urge us to constant activity throughout our life. But when we know that in point of fact activity never belongs to the Self, we cannot but think that such Vedic sayings, as speak of actions, are meant only for people who are devoid of true knowledge.

In fact in the theory of our opponent it is difficult to have any inclinations to perform actions which produce their results

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after death, such as life in Heaven, etc. When the hope of such enjoyment is held out to us, it is implied that we continue to exist even after the loss of our body. This means that the Self is really unborn. But how can an unborn Self enter into an action, seeing that the instrument of action, i. e., the body, does not belong to its essential nature? How can the Self, which is beyond all evidence, and, although taken as the ego, really devoid of all objective characters, be made to act by an injunction?

94. Moreover pleasure and pain have no real connection with the Self. The Self is the ultimate (inmost) subject whereas pleasure and pain are (outward) objections and so they cannot belong to it. When the Self is thus really beyond pleasure and pain, it can have no tendency towards actions which are supposed to bring pleasure.

95. When the Self does not sustain any real connection even with the body, what connection can it have with other objects? How can it then have pleasure in heavenly existence?

96. So it is certain that the Vedic exhortation to action must be meant for people who are devoid of real knowledge and who identify themselves with their body.

97-8. It has been said that we cannot have a sentence without a verb and that a verb stands for some action. But although a verb may be necessary for a sentence, it does not follow that any verb can be placed anywhere or that a verb, which express only the present being of a fact, can be replaced by a verb denoting an action. We admit such verbs as "am" in such sentences as "I am the Absolute" or "Thou art That", but they express some real stage of things and can never be construed as meaning some injunction for an act, yet to be done in the future.

99. Hence we come to the conclusion that by no action, whether of mind, body or speech, can a man attain freedom from bondage. It can be attained only by knowledge.

100. So the opinions expressed in favour of action may sound well in the mouth of a person given to sacrificial rites but they are quite ill-suited to one who knows the Self.

(to be continued)

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Technique of Naishkarmya Siddi

—SWAMI POORNANANDA TIRTHA

(Continued)

There are infinite rays of light emanating from a burning electric blub. The farther a ray moves off from the blub, it gets more and more divergent from other rays. Suppose two such rays start quarrelling about as to which is greater, one ray claiming 'I am great. I shine better', and the other ray contesting the claim. That is exactly the way people do who quarrel in the world over anything, ignoring their common nature and unity. Reality is one and indivisible. There are, no differences at all in the Atman. All are but rays emanating from Brahman, if the rays turn back to their common source and understand their oneness, all quarrels will cease and love reign supreme in life and relationships all over the world.

This is the message of Vedanta for mankind. It teaches the unity of everything. On this unity is based its gospel of universal love and peace. To attain this, it teaches that the way is for each individual mind to trace its source—the Atman and merge there. Thoughts alone sustain all these myriad expressions that form the world. If thoughts cease, the world too ceases. No objective phenomenon is experienced by any one in sleep, when the mind that projects and experiences the world is not at work. The mind is part of the glory that is the Atman. Let the mind merge itself in its source and know its divinity.

These manifold projections of names and forms—*Namarupa Prapancha*—is but the revelation or expression, of Atman or Brahman in all its glory through the mind. If you are ignorant of this unity, naturally you have the Dwaitabodha and come to believe in the truth of multiplicity. Then this play of samsara, with all its Sukha and Dukkha, will persist for you. It is the product of Avidya. Bondage and misery automatically develop from the wrong understanding of the great truth about yourself and the universe. Right understanding alone leads to lasting freedom, peace and bliss. Jnana is the only key to liberation and love.

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So long as you experience the world, it is valid for you. But do not take it to be real. It is subject to infinite mutations, hence unreal. Reality is immutable. Ignorance of truth is the malady. Its cure is knowledge alone. It comes on the dissolution of Avidya. The end of Avidya is Jivanmukti. The light of Jnana flashes of itself, spontaneously, in those who are pure at heart. They may not be able to clearly describe to others the way they realised Truth. Vedanta alone teaches this pathless path to Self-realisation. So follow Vedanta. The rest are like the blind leading the blind. Get rid of all misery by the light of Vedanta and be immersed in endless peace and joy. This technique is called Naishkarmya —the process of actionlessness— as in it all motions and vibrations of the body and mind, the content of all actions, completely stop. How can there be any motion where the mind turns within and sinks in the Self?

Advaida has been explained to be 'Non-Dualism', Ekism, Monism, etc. The idea of 'One' comes when there is a notion of 'Two'. But Advaita is beyond the notion of one and two. It is transcendental. It is unity of existence, beyond all multiplicity, beyond numbers, beyond quality and quantity.

अविरोधितया कर्म नाविद्यां विनिवर्तयेत् ।

Any Karma, secular or religious, such as ritual, puja etc., drag our mind outward. But in Jnana Nishtha we have to turn the mind inward, preventing it from going out. Since Karma is opposed to this process of withdrawal, how can it ever help Jnana? Itself the product of Ajnana, can Karma remove Ajnana? Ajnana can be removed only when you stop all movements. But in all ritualistic Karmas we are caught in motion, in the realm of Ajnana. So these can never produce Atma Jnana.

But there are secondary benefits to be gained from Karma. Rituals performed with purity of mind, will help to reduce Vishaya Pratipatti—attachment for worldly things. Control of food, control of speech, development of Satvaguna, Brahmacharya, Tápas, etc., go a long way to remove impurities of mind and heart. This helps the withdrawal of mind from the world inward. Ethics and morality too enable one to control the

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mind. But these are only indirect aids to withdrawal. In the Bhagavat Gita Krishna says:

सर्वधर्मान् परित्यज्य.....

'मां' —here does not refer to Sri Krishna as a human personality. If Krishna's is only a personal reference, Hinduism will be open to the same criticisms as Christianity. When it says, "Take refuge in Christ, you will go straight to heaven", be sure that liberation can never be attained by taking refuge in any personality, however holy or eminent. That will only strengthen the bondage. By 'Mam' in the Gita, Sri Krishna means the Supreme Reality—Satchidananda—

परे इति मे।

Let us go back to the topic of Jnana Nishtha. Nidhidhyasana, we have seen, is only a remembering process. We remember the Atman, the Self that we are always. Many questions are asked by Tarkikas or logicians about this. If the Self is something unknown and unknowable, how can it ever be known? If it is a thing known, it means the Self is conditioned by the mind like any other object. Again, we can remember a thing, only when it was previously known and then forgotten How can one remember the Self that has not been known earlier? There are many such objections and queries. It will take a long time to answer them.

Setting aside all such questions for the while, let us now actually sit and practice. While doing Nidhidhyasana, the involution process, today itself you can have a glimpse of the Atman. Tonight you can locate the Sakshi, Self. Be fully attentive. See whether you can't succeed.

Let us now turn to the method. In the Antahkarana, at a particular time, only one part will function. When there is a thought in the mind, i. e. when the mind is cognising thoughts, Buddhi and Chitta do not function. When the Buddhi functions, during its work of assessing, correlating and coming to decisions, mind and Chitta do not function. At a time, there will be one function only—either of the mind, Buddhi or Chitta.

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Again, even though we may feel there are many thoughts simultaneously passing in the mind or Buddhi, really there is and can be only one thought at a time. But the interval between each thought can be reduced very much. There can be a very quick flow of thoughts. What you now should do is to try to have only one thought. Japa can help much in this. But the shorter the Mantra the better. If the Mantra is very long, like "Om Namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya", it gives scope for the mind to wander. The Mantra should be short. And at the same time it must convey a very deep Bhava and meaning. One such Mantra is Soham. It means "The All-pervading, Infinite Satchidananda am I".

This 'Soham' Mantra should be ringing in you without break. Just as fresh waves come out on the surface of the ocean as soon as the old waves subside, so also incessantly, this Soham thought must dwell in your mind, rather the Chitta. Don't repeat it verbally, or orally. It should be a mental vibration, "That all-pervading Reality is me." Instead of chanting the Mantra, don't repeat its meaning in English, or any other language. Remember the meaning of the Mantra and just carry on repeating "Soham, Soham". Carry on daily like that regularly for some fixed hours. Then slowly the transformation will take place and the word and its meaning will become one as Kalidasa says:

वागर्थाविव संपृक्तौ वागर्थप्रतिपत्तये ।
जगतः पितरौ वन्दे पार्वतीपरमेश्वरौ ॥

In the initial stages, a child reads "C-A-T"—cat, Bekku (in Kannada). Every time it reads 'Cat'—it repeats its meaning in Kannada. But after sometime, 'CAT' for the child is CAT itself; it need not be associated with its equivalent in Kannada. Like that as you carry on chanting 'Soham' the meaning will also be automatically, springing in the mind.

So go back to your home. Enter the meditation room, if you have got a separate room for that. Close all the doors and windows. Sit down on an asana, any comfortable posture. Keep

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perfectly quiet. No unnecessary movement of the limbs should be allowed. Close your eyes, see even the eye-balls do not move. Then slowly, steadily, start chanting 'Soham, Soham' mentally. Develop this one thought consciously. Repeat it with Bhava intensely, gently, subtly, firmly, seriously, silently, sincerely and effortlessly. The inner vibration would create a wonderful subtle and happy feeling— a Chaitanya Vritti.

As you proceed thus consciously, systematically, without your being aware of it, so many other thoughts will be coming up unnoticed. Don't resist. These thoughts will pass over and cross the mind. In the beginning when you started mentally repeating "Soham"—the Antahkarana was having only that one thought—Soham. Now slowly the Buddhi thought will silently creep in. At a particular instance only one motion, Bhava, can be there in the Antahkarana. So now, the Soham Bhava will be replaced by a Mano-bhava and then Buddhi Bhava. Then, suddenly, the realisation will dawn on you. "Ah! the mind has strayed away. It is no longer Dhyana." This recognition will be there for a very small time, perhaps a micro-second. But don't get perturbed.

Now, mark my words carefully. The wandering, straying of the mind was discovered by something else. That discoverer cannot be of the nature of the mind: that which recognises the straying of the mind, must be something beyond the mind. So that discovering entity, which operated for an infinitesimally small moment is actually the witness, the Sakshi in us, the Self-conscious Awareness. Now we have located the Self, discovered it. After understanding the straying of the mind, all the subsequent feelings of regret, self admonition, scolding of the mind etc., are actually the functions of the mind itself ! The Self but expressed itself for a very brief moment.

Now that you have seen what is the Self, the Sakshi, that witnesses the movements of the mind, Buddhi etc., hereafter when you repeat "Soham", it should be a process of remembrance. Try to remember the 'Sah' (सः) the Self that witnessed the wanderings of the mind previously. It should then be a

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process of remembering and repetition creating a movement in the Chitta. Initially, you did not know what is that Sah (सः). So the repetition was either in the mind or in the Buddhi. Now you should go beyond these two and take up the chanting during Japa, deeper in the Chitta.

In this way if you carry on practising Sadhana regularly, you are sure to have the revelation of the Atman. Morning and evening set apart a minimum of one hour for this Nididhyasana. Practise earnestly, seriously, steadily. Suddenly, one day you will have a wonderful unfoldment of the Truth-Atma Jnana. You will just get that Samadhi Anubhava. There is no doubt about that.

I have said all this in a matter of minutes. But how many years it may take one for self-realisation, I cannot say. It all depends upon your seriousness, intensity and subtlety of Sadhana. In some cases it may take six years, others may take three years or even in an year somebody may get it. Generally, when a person practises, due to the absence of any disciplined life, all these years of his earlier life, engaged in gross activities, his mind may pull him back. To avoid such a pull of the mind is not easy. But if you change your daily habits, take to spiritual study and base your life on a new foundation of ethics, dharma, purity, gentleness, love, self-discipline, honesty, Tapasya and a perfect self-control. Without a complete change in the inner personality, progress in the spiritual path will be very, very slow and hard.

Ashtavakra says:

हरो यद्युपदेष्टा ते हरिः कमलजोपि वा ।
तथापि न तव स्वास्थ्यं सर्वविस्मरणादृते ॥

Many people just blindly fall at the feet of Gurujis, Sanyasins, Matajis, Babas etc. They want a short cut. They expect the Guru to hand over as Prasad a packet of Jnana to them! But hear what Ashtavakra says, "You may have Siva, Brahma, Vishnu as your Guru. But until you know how to forget

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everything, you can never hope to get Mukthi." Sarva Vismarana means forgetting the very mechanism that forgets. That means you must just go beyond the Antahkarana, beyond the Chitta and Ahamkara to get Atma Jnana. That is the Sadhana of Jnana Nishtha.

So develop such a divine attitude from now on. Practise earnestly in all seriousness with a determined, conscious effort. Who cannot attain Jnana? It is within the grasp of every one. Yoga Vasishta says:

"Oh, Rama, if a person takes to the close association of Mahatmas, realised souls and also gain correct understanding of Vedantic knowledge, he can attain Brahma Jnana not in terms of months, but even in a few days' time."

In our case, in modern days, the time required may be more. What is required is to get rid of Avidya, our delusions, misconceptions and misunderstandings. We have today too much of these. So the process of getting rid of these false things may take more time. Once the veil is removed, Atma flashes automatically. Nobody need help to produce or create for us Atma Jnana. If the dirt is removed, the mirror at once starts reflecting the light. So the process of eliminating the unwanted Ajnana alone takes time and effort. So carry on with deliberate, conscious effort, you will quite certainly attain Naishkarmya, which is nothing but Jivan Mukti.

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Think A While—Every Day.

The Gita is immortal for it gives as much to everyone who dips into it as they are capable of taking out of it. The Gita is immortal because it can elevate mortal man to immortality. The Gita is immortal because its teachings are eternal and remain unchanged and valid for all time. Why not we take up this text for thinking over a little while every day?

Let us begin today;

Manmanaa bhava Mad-bhakto Madyaajee Maam namaskuru
Maam eva ishyasi satyam te Pratijaane priyosi Me

"I am telling you the truth, for you are very dear to me. You will merge unto me alone provided you think of me always; you remain my devotee, offering everything that you do unto me and prostrate to me in humbleness."

Are we not, most of us devotees of the Lord? Don't we think of Him at least sometimes? And do we not prostrate before His deities whenever we want to get some wish fulfilled through His compassion? Was not Arjuna His devotee? Did he not go and wait at Krishn'a feet, waiting for Krishna to wake up from His sleep, with Duryodhana waiting at the head of His bed? Did not the Pandava, who had the first option of chosing either the help of the Yadava army or the Lord's own personal services, opt for and get Krishna's personal help in the war at the Kurukshetra? Thus, did not Dhanamjaya prostrate at the feet of the Lord and get his wish fulfilled? Yes, Yes!

Then, with the Pandava and Kaurava armies facing each other, when Arjuna lost his pluck and courage and became fickle-minded, refusing to fight, the Lord had to din the teachings of the Gita into Arjuna's wavering mind. The sloka quoted above is one of the cardinal ones contained in the whole text. Why was it necessary to exhort Arjuna: "Manmanaa bhava, Madyaajee bhava; Maam namaskuru"? Because Arjuna's devotion to the Lord was selfish. He went to Dwaraka to meet Vasudeva only to prevail upon Him to be his charioteer in the Kurukshetra war. Arjuna knew that the side that had Vasudeva

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repaired—at a cost of Rs. 75 only. When this report came, someone else remarked: "After all, God is kind to us. He took care to see that the clock was not smashed to smithereens, making it impossible to repair it and make it usable again. It is a costly piece, which was purchased at an astonishingly low price at that time. I am glad that, even if we have to spend that Rs. 75, the clock is going to be back there on the wall, ticking merrily again."

What is the difference between the two views expressed? Is it not, after all, a question of how you look at things?

The other day, I was walking over a high embankment. Suddenly my foot slipped and I fell. But somehow, I clung on with the left hand holding to a jutting stone on the side and scrambled up again. There were scratches on the left hand and the right thigh. When I returned to the Asram, someone remarked: "Swamiji is always in haste. He should be more carefull in whatever he does." True, if I had been more careful, perhaps the fall could have been avoided. But, is not there another way of looking at it? Suppose I had not been able to cling on to that stone and avoid a fall right down ten feet or more? Is it not possible that something much worse than a few scratches might have resulted? God, in his infinite mercy, saved me from a greater accident. Should I not be grateful to Him?" This was my reaction, which was also openly expressed.

There was a cup, placed on the table, with half-a-cup of tea in it. One saw it and said: "The cup is half empty." Another observed it and said: "The cup is half full." What is the difference between these statements? To express the same phenomenon, one had recourse to 'empti'-ness while the other had recourse to 'full'-ness! As I said, it is all how you look at things.

I repeat: every happening in the world can be seen favourably or unfavourably according to how you train your mind to react to such happenings. The technique of a contented life is to acquire the capacity to make the mind react favourably always to any given happening around you.

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Towards The Quest For Knowledge

—Dr. K. N. Upadhyaya

तद्विद्धि प्रणिपातेन परिप्रश्नेन सेवया
उपदेक्ष्यन्ति ते ज्ञानं ज्ञानिनस्तत्त्वदर्शिनः

Tad viddhi pranipatena pariprasnena sevaya
Upadekshyanti te jnanam jnaninas tattvadarsinah

"Realize that (knowledge) by reverential submission, by earnest inquiry, and by service. The enlightened men who have seen the Truth will instruct thee in knowledge."

Geeta IV-34

The above verse of the *Bhagavadgeeta* well expresses the quintessence of the spiritual quest for knowledge. It clearly points out the basic purpose of human life and suggests means for its attainment.

I. The Purpose of Human Life

Saints and sages of all times and places have universally acknowledged that the true purpose of human life is the search for knowledge, and to attain, thereby, the state of absolute blessedness here and now. The bondage or suffering of man is ultimately due to ignorance, and, therefore, knowledge is the only way to attain freedom and bliss. But who can obtain this knowledge? The infra-human species, such as birds, beasts and plants cannot even seek for it consciously. Nor is it the privilege of any supra-human species, such as angels and gods, to obtain it. It is the rare privilege only of human beings to seek for and realize this knowledge. This is precisely the reason why man is regarded as 'the crown of creation', and gods are said to envy his lot. Since the short span of human life is the only opportunity to realize this knowledge, and to attain final release from suffering, the *Gita* fervently appeals to us not to let this rare and most valuable opportunity glide by, and exorts: "Realize that (knowledge)".

II. The Need of a Teacher

The realization of Knowledge, however, is as difficult as it is important. In the course of the repeated cycles of births and deaths since time immemorial, man has become so deeply immersed in ignorance that he is hardly aware of the fact that he is ignorant. He mistakenly regards his ignorant state as the normal state, and hardly lends ear to the words of wisdom. He is spiritually deaf and blind. He is in a state of deep sleep. He is

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almost dead spiritually, and is alive only to his worldly needs. He, therefore, needs some extremely kind and gracious man of wisdom to infuse life into him, and to shake him from his very roots.

Even for worldly knowledge, we have to depend on someone to help and guide us. From our very infancy, we have been continuously learning various things through our parents, teachers and friends. In the case of spiritual wisdom, it is even more necessary to have a qualified guide, because spirituality is the most subtle and difficult discipline. There are many more difficult and subtle obstacles and temptations in the internal path of spirituality than in the external path of the world. Therefore, we cannot travel the path of spirituality without the helping hand of an experienced and qualified guide. In order to be a successful doctor or engineer, one will also have to undergo a practical training under the supervision of experienced experts. Spirituality is a highly scientific and practical discipline, and one cannot be an adept by merely relying on books. The practical guidance of the experienced teacher is a must in this discipline, without which one is likely to be lost on the way. If teachers were not necessary, there would have been no need for saints, prophets and sons of God to come to this world.

It is, however, of crucial importance that the teacher must be a perfect one. An imperfect teacher may lead us astray, and may ultimately prove more harmful than helpful to the holy aspirant. The *Geeta*, therefore, emphasises as special qualification of the teacher that he must be a 'seer of the Reality or Truth' (tattvadarsi). In other words, what the holy aspirant needs is the *perfect living Master*.

One has, therefore to be extremely careful in seeking for the Master. There is, however, no cause for despair or disappointment. If there is sufficient earnestness and spiritual longing on the part of the seeker, he is sure to find the perfect Master. True Masters are equally eager, if not more, to impart their wisdom to the disciples who are ready for it. The seeker, owing to his ignorance, is groping in the dark, but the Master is watching with clearest vision as to who is sincerely seeking for him, and once the ground is prepared, the Master is bound to appear. When the flower blossoms forth, the bee is bound to appear. Although the ignorant seeker often thinks that he has found the Master, it is usually the case that the Master finds the disciple. Just as it is the duty of the holy aspirant to purify himself to the utmost by leading a virtuous life, and to seek ardently for the

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perfect Master, so also the Master mercifully takes upon himself the duty of imparting spiritual wisdom to the disciple. Thus, the *Geeta* assures the seeker of knowledge: "The enlightened men who have seen the Truth will instruct thee in knowledge."

It is important to note that the *Geeta* does not speak of the teacher in the singular, but in the plural. This seems to indicate that the *Geeta* does not have the narrowness of dogmatic sectarian religions according to which the founder or teacher of one's own sect is the only true teacher. It, on the other hand, refers to all such teachers, regardless of class or clan, place or time, who have direct vision of the Truth. Since the Truth is the same or God is the same, the wise men or saints who realize the Truth or God are all essentially the same. Naturally, what they teach is also the same. The name and forms of particular teachers, therefore, do not matter so long as they are perfect Masters or embodiments of Truth.

III. Means of Truth-Realization

After obtaining the perfect Master, the real spiritual journey of the holy aspirant begins. The *Geeta* prescribes three important means whereby the goal of Truth-realization can be attained, and the purpose of the holy life fulfilled. They are (i) reverential submission, (ii) earnest inquiry, and (iii) service.

The basic philosophy of the *Geeta* must be clearly understood in this connection. The perfect Master, according to it, is really non-different from God. Krsna clearly says in the *Geeta*: "I hold, the knower verily in Myself, for having his soul united with Me, he is firmly established in Me: the highest goal"[1] Like the Upanishads which declare, "the Knower of Brahman becomes Brahman", [2] the *Geeta* also reiterates "the Knower of Brahman is established in Brahman".[3]

Since the ignorant man does not ordinarily have the ability to listen to the voice of unmanifested God, God manifests Himself in human forms so that He may be easily accessible to man. This is the Primary purpose of sons and incarnations of God, saints, prophets and masters coming to this world. But the

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1 Jnani tv atmai'va me matam asthitah sa hi yuktatma mam eva'nuttamam gatim, Gita VII 18.

2 Brahmaveda Brahmaiva bhavati, Mundaka III.29

3 Brahmavid brahmani sthitah. Gita V. 20

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ignorant man still tends to ignore such God-Men, He is again deluded because of their human form. As the *Geeta* puts it: "The fools disregard Me because of assuming human form, not Knowing My higher nature as the Lord of all beings."[4] It is, thererefore, essential that after discovering the true saint or Master, one must accord him the same treatment which is due to God. The *Geeta* prescribes three mutually complementary ways whereby spiritual wisdom can be learned from the perfect Master or God-Man.

i Reverential Submission:

The initial hurdle of recognizing the true teacher having been already overcome, and the disciple having already satisfied himself about the competence of the teacher, he must then completely surrender himself to the Will of the Master, and take shelter in his love. It is not a blind obedience to an external authority, but a wise decision to place oneself under the care and guidance of one who is competent and qualified to guide. It is foolish to plunge oneself in the ocean with the vain egoistic feeling that one will be able to fight the mighty waves and overcome other hazards of it without any training and guidance from the experienced sailor. One must remove his egoistic foolhardiness and replace it by full confidence in a God-Man. He is here for the sole purpose of saving us, Krsna, the incarnate God, declares in the *Geeta*: "Abandoning all vacillating thoughts come to Me alone for shelter. Be not grieved. I shall release thee from all evils."[5] This is what is known as seeking shelter *(sarana)* in a God-Man, and is the easiest way to win the love and spiritual wisdom of the Master.

It is, however, extremely difficult to do so owing to our egoistic clinging to our superficial self. Unless this great barrier of the superficial self is removed with the help and guidance of the perfect Master, the inner spark of Divinity cannot blaze forth and assume its full brilliance.

ii Earnest Inquiry :

The treasure of spiritual wisdom does not open to us all at once. Truth is gradually unfolded by the Master in the course of spiritual discourses. The disciple should make earnest

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4 Avajananti mam mudha manusim tanum asritam Param bhavam ajanaṅto mama bhutamahesvaram Gita IX.11

5 Geeta XVIII 66

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inquiry in order to get rid of his residual problems and puzzlements. Intellect has to be first satisfied by intellect before it is transcended and culminates in spiritual wisdom. This is the true purpose of earnest intellectual inquiry which the *Geeta* calls '*pariprasna*' and which is more commonly known as '*satsanga*'.

The value of such earnest inquiries by the disciple and spiritual discourses by the Master can hardly be overemphasised. Man is always influenced by the company he keeps. Just as the perfume of flowers imparts its sweet fragrance to anything which is in its vicinity, so also the radiating current of love and wisdom of the enlightened man freely flows into those who seek his company. But in order to take full advantage of such company, one must approach men of wisdom, and listen to their discourses with an open mind and heart. In order that a vessel may collect the water of the rain shower, one must keep it in the proper position, and remove the cover from the top, for, if the vessel is turned upside down, or is covered from above, it will remain empty even if there is a heavy downpour. The *Gita*, therefore, advices people to approach the wise men with humility and imbibe their wisdom and saintly qualities through honest inquiry.

The company of saints is an extraordinary workshop where the mind is so cleansed of its impurities that it is made worthy of meeting the Lord and receiving the Truth. Therefore, those who are seeking for spiritual knowledge, must seek the company of the saints or enlightened men.

iii Service:

Service signifies the attitutde of dedication and the consequent dedicated works of the holy aspirant through which he is ultimately led to realize the highest goal. Pride and egotism must be replaced by humility and submission. The *Geeta* holds the view that those who are humble will rise high, and those who submit to service will be ultimately worthy of being served.

Pride, begotten of ignorance, is one of the greatest enemies of man, and this is removed by the company of wise men and saints. By gradually making us aware of our defects and blemishes, they inculcate in us a sense of humility. This very attitude of humility finds expression through various forms of service (*seva*).

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Man is ordinarily proud of his body, mind and wealth (worldy possessions). knowing not how feeble and evanescent they all are. With the deepening of spiritual knowledge, he becomes increasingly aware of their true nature, and in utter humility dedicates them all to the Master or God, and attunes his soul to Him. Thus, his dedication or service is of four kinds, viz., service with (i) wealth (ii) body (iii) mind and (iv) soul.

The dedication of everything, including his whole being, does not, however, mean that the seeker of spiritual wisdom has to abandon his wealth and life. What is really required is the spirit of detachment from everything worldly, viz., wealth, body and mind, and a willingness to offer them all in the service of the Master. Far better than the service with wealth, body and mind, however, is the service with the soul, which consists in withdrawing the soul current from every pore of the body, and merging it into the ocean of the supreme Divinity indwelling in us. In other words, self-absorption (*samadhi*) is the highest form of service (*seva*) which is sure to culminate in the realization of the highest wisdom. The first three kinds of service are meant to detach man from the worldly entanglements of wealth, body and mind, and the last one, viz., the service of the soul, is meant to attach him to the Divine current.

Thus, the upshot of the spiritual quest, according to the *Geeta*, consists in (i) finding the perfect living Master (*satguru-tattvadarsi*), (ii) taking refuge in him (*sarana-pranipata*) (iii) listening to his discourses, and keeping his company (*satsanga-pariprasna*), and (iv) rendering service to him (*seva*). The Vedantic teaching of finding the teacher (*guru*), listening to his discourses and studying the scriptures (*sravana*), reflecting (*manana*) and meditating and (*nididhyasana*) on them is also the reiteration of the same somewhat different words.*

Those, indeed, are blessed who lend ears to this universal teaching and realizing the great value of this most precious and rare gift of human life, try to fulfil its purpose by attaining the supreme wisdom.

Courtesy: "Tapovan Prasad"

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*cf. S. Radhakrishnan, The Bhagavadgita (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1967), p. 170.

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Random Reflections

The Sun and the Moon rise in the East and set in the West, the stars twinkle in the sky, the seasons come and go, the high mountains and peaks put on their heavy coat of snow during the winter, but shed part at least of the thickness of their coats during summer, by melting, anxious as they are to feed the rivers with the water that man is thirsting for both for himself and his crops. All these have been happening in cyclic order from the beginning of Mother Earth. And no one can even dare to think of any change in the functioning of these great forces.

Why, then, should man want changes in his own life? Why should he work for such changes, which always make him more and more of a seeker of material comfort and leasurely abandon? Can he not for a moment reflect that there is something in him, too, that is changeless and immutable and shines like the Sun eternally?

If only he were to probe with his keen mind, he would realise that the body he adores for its beauty and suppleness, the comforts and wordly pleasures that he heaps on it, will all pass into oblivion. The perishable body, therefore, is not really one's ally but only an appendage!

Did we talk about 'one's body'? That is confusing. Is there a *one* as distinct from and apart from the body? Who is that someone who inhabits every body and claims to be separate from it? Is that what they refer to as the Self? Let that be. Did we say that it is no use toiling for the little comforts and pleasures that we seek through the body? Is it possible for one to live a life of contentment without these little comforts and pleasures? We are not sure.

But what about those rare souls we come across sometimes, who wander about as mendicants, who do not care for anything in the world, who live on any chance food that is offered to them, who sleep under the shade of any leafy tree, who claim that the whole wide world is their 'home', but who are so full of peace and joy, by the very look on their faces? To them the comforts and pleasures of the world are as dirt! They say they

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revel in their Self and do not bother about the changeful and fleeting sense-world!

Yes: they must be right, for their life is an open book for us to read. And we see in it that they live as they preach—not attached to anything, not seeking the petty carnel pleasure that others seek, free as birds and capable of soaring high above the mundane misery-ridden world!

If they can break their fetters and remain free, full of joy and bliss, should it not be possible for us, too, to do likewise, if only we try? If only we dare to become free?

Reflect and decide.

Asram News

Swami Poornananda completed his annual Jnana Yajnas at Poona and Bombay during February-March. He will shortly be going to Hyderabad for a quiet period of Yoga-Sadhana prior to proceeding to Bhilai for a series of discourses there.

A "commemoration volume"—Atma Jyoti—has been published in memory of Swami Atmananda who attained *mahasamadhi* in June last. The publication contains personal sketches written by many prominent personalities who were close to Swamiji in the political and Adhyatmic fields, together with many photographs. Those who are interested in getting copies may write to the Asram giving their full addressess.

The twice postponed Retreat at Mahabaleshwar is now finally scheduled to take place at the same venue between the 20th of April and the 7th of May (actual period and date to be finalised yet). Those who want to join the Retreat as delegates are to write for their reservations to the addresses indicated in the previous issue of Kaivalya Sudha. Poornananda Tirtha and Purushottam Tirtha will be participating in the Retreat.

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